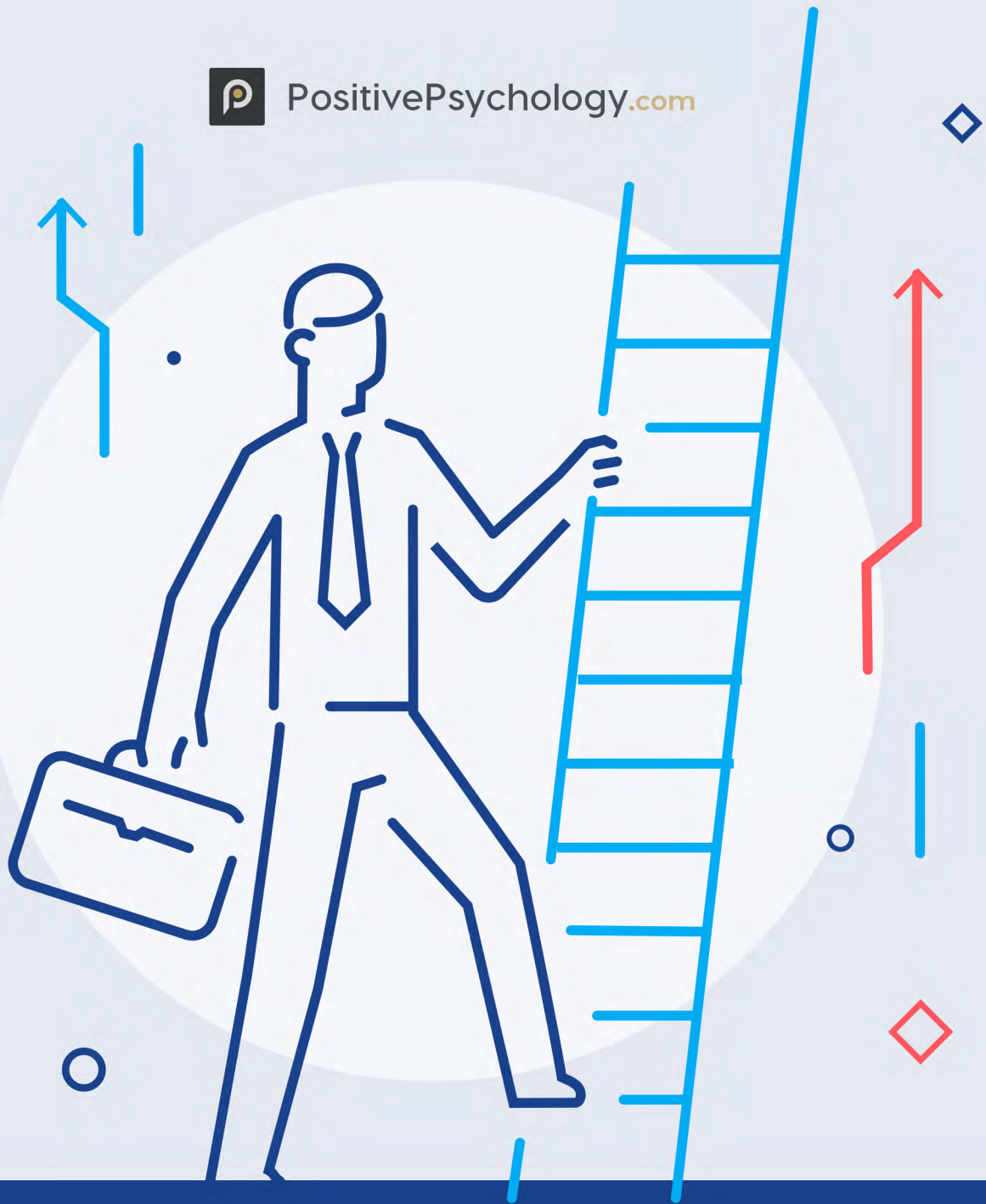




PositivePsychology.com



3 Work & Career Coaching exercises

-
- SCIENCE-BASED
 - FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

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Welcome

How do you feel when waking up on working days? Do you look forward to going to work or do you wish it was Friday afternoon already?

Research has shown that those who feel enthusiastic about going to work have a career that aligns with their interests, values, and strengths. This alignment increases intrinsic motivation and happiness, provides purpose and meaning, and buffers the effects of workplace stressors.

It is a great pleasure to offer you this compilation of exercises on work and career coaching. During the past years, Positive Psychology has gained an increasing amount of attention, both from helping professionals and researchers. This attention has resulted in many valuable insights in what contributes to a happy, fulfilling life. In addition, positive psychology has given us many tools not only to flourish, but also to cope with difficult times in life.

Since 2013, our aim with PositivePsychology.com has been to contribute to this field by disseminating the science to psychology practitioners and educators alike.

We hope that the tools presented here may inspire you too to increase your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of the people around you. Please feel free to print and share this document with others.

For those who like what they see, make sure to also check out our online searchable database with all kinds of practical positive psychology tools:

<https://positivepsychology.com/toolkit/>

All the best,

Seph Fontane Pennock
Hugo Alberts, Ph.D.





Work & Career



Exercise



45-60 min



Client



No

Career Genogram

People make decisions daily, from the mundane to the meaningful, but to what extent are those choices influenced by others? While many people affect our decisions in myriad ways, family heavily influences career choices [1]. Indeed, those closest to us shape our values, beliefs, and attitudes, and it is hardly surprising that parents and other family members influence our career choices [1]. Further, family members can provide occupational information concerning their jobs and the knowledge they have amassed over their work lives [2].

While the influence of family is pervasive and often beneficial, it is important to note that it is not always helpful. For instance, the unfulfilled ambitions of parents can direct their children's career choices in a specific direction [3].

Hence, how can we better understand family influences on career-related opinions, assumptions, and choices? The career genogram helps people create a family tree that maps out the occupations of those closest to them [1]. Through this multigenerational map, individuals can pinpoint their influences, identify the source of their career expectations, illuminate generational patterns of vocational choice, and recognize family judgments about what constitutes a successful career [4].

With this self-knowledge and insight, people can decide how they want to respond to family influences and begin to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their future career stories [5]. In this exercise, participants will create a career genogram that maps out the different occupations of their closest relatives. Participants can better understand how the family has influenced their work-related opinions, assumptions, and choices.



Author

This tool was created by Elaine Houston.



Goal

This exercise aims to help participants become aware that career choices are often influenced by what parents and other family members do or did in the past. The career genogram will help individuals create a 'family tree' of careers that maps out the different occupations of those closest to them. In doing so, participants can better understand family influences on their opinions, assumptions, and career choices.



Advice

- A career genogram covers three generations: the participant, parents/guardians, and grandparents. Individuals can, however, include relatives like aunts, uncles, cousins, or siblings, depending on who they consider influential.
- Note that this exercise may not be suited for all clients. Some clients may be uncomfortable creating a family career genogram. Each genogram requires collecting information from family members. Some clients may have a poor relationship with family members or have limited knowledge of family members' work lives, for instance.
- An example of a completed career genogram is provided in Appendix B.



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Career Genogram

Family members can influence us in many ways, sometimes without us even realizing it. Our beliefs and attitudes toward work, different occupations, and those closest to us heavily influence our understanding of what we should give to (and get from) our careers. Indeed, sometimes career choices are not based on what we want or who we are but on the beliefs and experiences of our parents and other family members.

With this in mind, it is important to understand your relatives' influence on your career choices and where your attitudes toward work come from.

In this exercise, you will create a family career genogram. A career genogram is like a family tree of careers that maps out the primary occupations of those closest to you. Typically, genograms include the information of three generations: you, your parents/guardians, and your grandparents.

Once complete, you will have a clear visual illustration of your career influences that will help you understand how the family has influenced your opinions, assumptions, and career choices.

Step 1: Completing your career genogram

You will first complete your career genogram, filling in the occupations of your closest relatives. You will see a circle on the blank career genogram (Appendix A). In this circle, write your name and profession.

Now, in the two boxes above your name, write the names and occupations of your parents, stepparents, or guardians.

In the remaining boxes, write the names and occupations of your grandparents.

If you wish, you can also write the nature of the relationship in each box. While a career genogram typically spans three generations (you, your parents/stepparents/guardians, and your grandparents), you may wish to include other relatives if you feel they have significantly influenced your career choices. You may also add extra boxes if required.

Step 2: Understanding family attitudes and values

After completing your career genogram, take time to think about your family's attitudes, beliefs, and values. This will help you develop a deeper understanding of these relatives' influence on your career choices.

With the relatives included in your career genogram, write your responses to the questions below in the space provided.



1. How would these members of your family define success?

2. How would they define failure?

3. Why do you think these relatives chose (or ended up in) the job or career they have/had?



4. Do your family members believe that some occupations are better than others? If so, what jobs are admired or mocked by your family?

5. What do these family members think about hobbies, relaxation, and leisure activities?

6. What do your family consider more important: a stable and secure job or following a dream?



Step 3: Reflection

Now that you have looked at your familial attitudes and beliefs in more detail, you will spend some time reflecting on your answers.

Take a moment to look at your completed career genogram and, considering your responses in step 2, write your answers to the following questions in the space provided.

1. Considering the relatives' careers included in your career genogram, what common themes or patterns do you notice?

2. Which patterns or common themes seem most significant to you and why?

3. Who in your family do you think is or was successful? Why?



4. Who would you like to be compared to in your family the most? Why?

5. In what ways has your family influenced your career choices in the past, both positively and negatively?

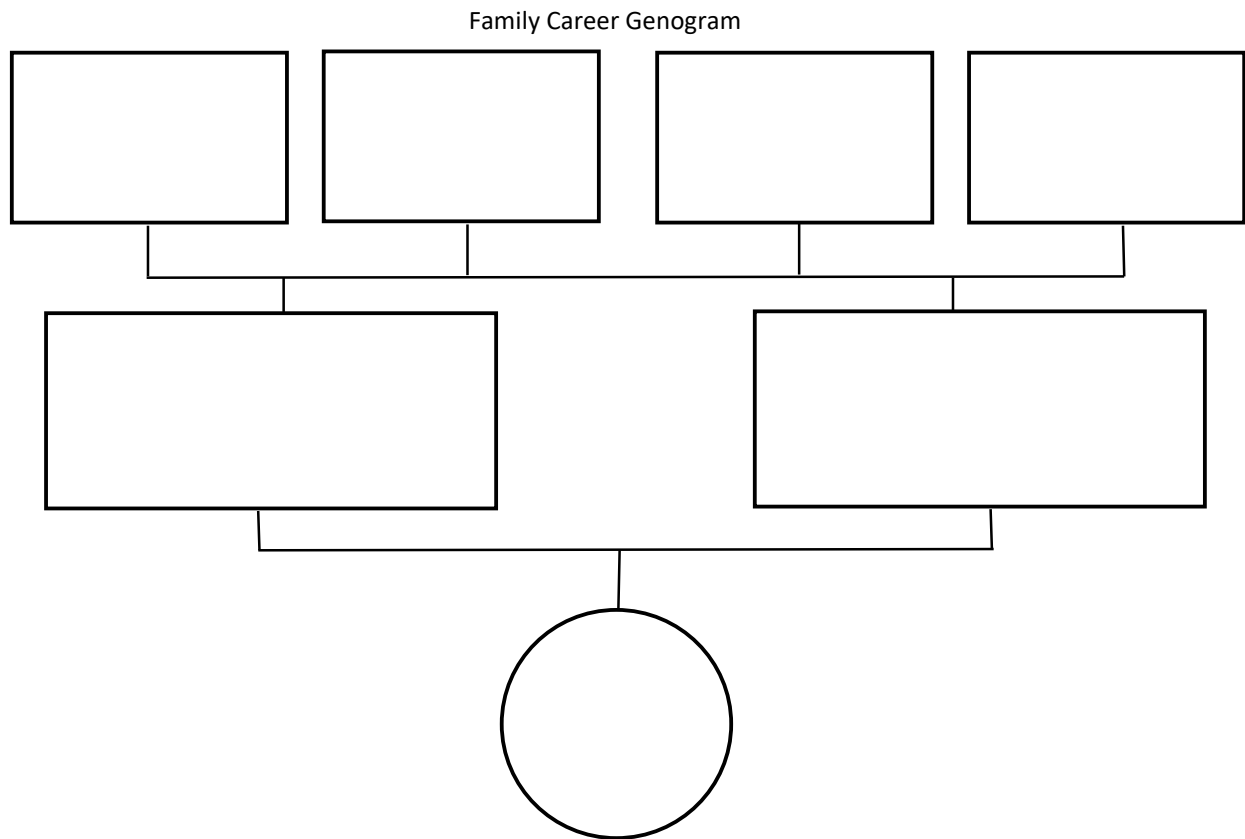
6. In what ways has your family shaped your career aspirations and expectations?

Step 4: General reflection

- In what ways did you find this exercise helpful?
- How has this exercise helped you understand your family's influence on career choices?
- What insights have you gained from this exercise?
- How can you apply what you have learned to future career decisions?

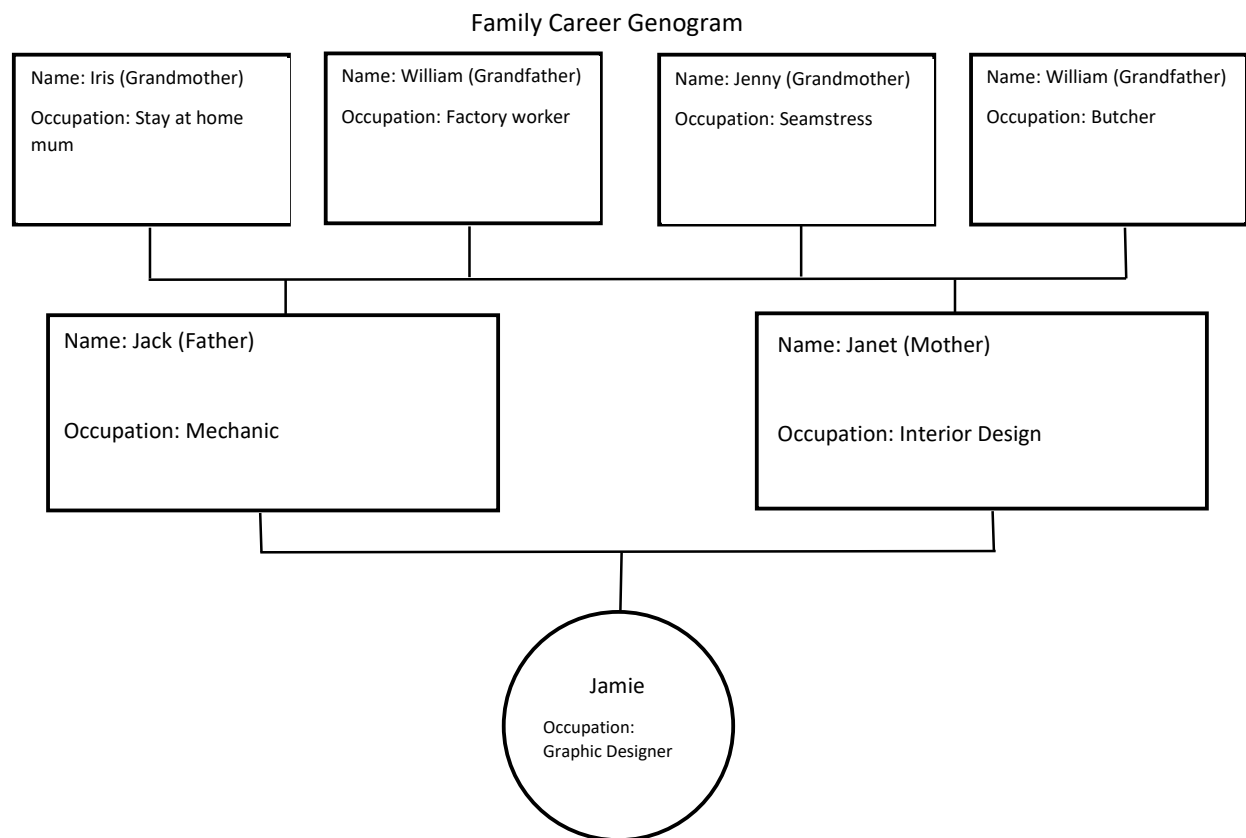


Appendix A: Blank career genogram





Appendix B: A completed example of a career genogram



**Work & Career**

Exercise



20 min



Client



No

Your Core Values at Work

Values are defined as “fundamental attitudes guiding our mental processes and behaviors [that] produce the belief that life is meaningful and serve as a measure of how meaningful one’s actions are, that is, consistent with that person’s value system” [1]. Values also have an affective dimension; they are the primary basis of goal-directed behavior and the stimulus for the development of behavior related to goal attainment [2].

Values have been portrayed as more fundamental traits than interests, and it has been suggested that career counseling should focus primarily on concerns for values without precluding the use of other constructs [2, 3]. Values work is also predicated on the idea that career counseling should, in most cases, center on life-role counseling because of the interaction between life roles and the unlikely outcome that occupation can satisfy all of an individual’s values [2, 3]. Because values focus partially on desired end states, they can be used to explain why people who choose some occupations are unhappy with their choices even when they perform the tasks associated with those jobs in an exemplary fashion [2].

Values clarification is a well-known therapeutic exercise that helps people understand what is important to them in their lives and how well they are currently living up to these important standards [4]. When applied to the work/career domain, values clarification can help people understand where they can derive meaning from at work and how they could live more in line with their values—and consequently feel happier and more satisfied—at work [5, 6].



Author

This tool was created by Dr. Lucinda Poole and Dr. Hugo Alberts.



Goal

This tool aims to help people clarify their core work values by examining four areas: general, working environment, work relationships, and work activities.



Advice

- Encourage clients to revisit this exercise regularly, as their work values may change over time and in different work situations
- It is important to emphasize to your clients that the purpose of the exercise is to clarify their values, not the values of their current workplace. Clients may find it difficult to separate these two things initially, especially if they have been at their current workplace for a long time.
- This tool would benefit clients who are considering a career change or are unemployed and looking for a job and those who are unhappy at work and have no idea why. It would also be useful for clients interested in knowing how well their values match those of their organization.



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Your Core Values at Work

Since we spend (on average) half of our waking hours working, it makes sense that we should know and understand what is most important to us at work (i.e., what our core work values are). People who live in line with their values are happier and more fulfilled.

This exercise involves sorting through an extensive list of values to decide what is most important to *you* at work. When completing the exercise, try to be as true to yourself as possible. Your and your workplace's values may differ, which is alright.

Step 1: Sort value "importance."

Our values at work can be grouped into four categories:

1. Work in general
2. Work environment
3. Work relationships
4. Work activities

Appendix displays a list of values for each category.

Read each value and decide whether it is not important to you, important to you, or very important to you. Keep in mind that we are focusing on what you consider important in the context of work. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box.

Step 2: Choose top values

Review the values that you have marked as "very important." From these values, choose two values per category that are most important to you at this time in your working life. These are your core work values. List your core values per category in the "Core values" column in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Overview of core values**

Category	Core values	Value congruence (1-10)
Work in general		
Working environment		
Working relationships		
Work activities		

Step 3: Rate value congruence

Rate how well you live in line with your core values at work on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = not at all; 10 = very well). Write down these scores in the “value congruence” column in Table 1.

For example, if one of your core values at work is “creativity,” and you feel that you are not currently able to express your creativity at work, you may enter a value congruence score of “5”.



Step 4: Reflection

Consider the following questions.

1. Which of your top values are you currently attending to enough at work (scored 7 or more)?

2. Which values might need more attention or effort (scored 6 or less)?

3. What action(s) could you take to bring you closer to these values?



Appendix: Work Values Sorting

Below are four groups of work values: general work values, work environment values, work relationships, and work activity values. Read each value and decide whether it is very important to you, important to you, or not very important to you in your working life. Place a checkmark in the corresponding box.

Table 1. List of general work values

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Achievement: Able to meet my goals.			
Work/life balance: Time for family, work, and play.			
Independence: Autonomy and control across my position.			
Passion: Work that evokes a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement.			
Integrity: Able to stand up for what I believe in.			
Honesty: Telling the truth and knowing that others are telling the truth.			
Positive influence: Able to have a positive impact on others.			
Respect: Care and trust of self and others.			
Status: Having a high professional position.			
Making a difference: Work that has a positive impact on others/society.			
Persistence: Continuing to work on tasks despite challenges and until completion.			
Ambition: Strong desire and determination to achieve success.			
Optimism: Hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something.			

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Good judgment: Careful consideration of the consequences of my decisions.			
Innovation: Creating a new method, idea, product, etc.			
Dedication: The quality of being dedicated or committed to a task or purpose.			
Mastery: High degree of knowledge or skill in a particular subject or activity.			
Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.			
Resilience: Bouncing back in the face of challenge or adversity.			
Work ethic: Dedication and commitment to fulfilling my tasks and responsibilities.			

Table 2. List of values relating to the working environment

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Pace: Work that moves or develops quickly.			
Flexibility: Able to work according to my changing schedule.			
Fair Income: Pay equates to output.			
Learning: Work that challenges me and leads to growth.			
Location: Work that is in a convenient place and an easy commute.			
Predictable: Work where you know what is going to happen day after day.			



Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Flow: Work where there are few disruptions throughout the day.			
Relaxed: Work where there are few pressures to get things done.			
Structured: Work that is organized and has a specific set time.			
Freedom: Work where I set my schedule and plan how and when I work.			
Safety: Protection of the safety, health and welfare of employees.			
Equality: Employees are treated fairly, with equal rights and opportunities.			
Professionalism: Expectation of appropriate conduct, behavior, and attitude.			
Discipline: Adherence to workplace systems, ethics, rules, and procedures.			
Ethics: Appreciation of what is morally right and wrong.			
Pragmatism: Dealing with things sensibly and realistically.			
Sustainability: Consideration for the value and finite nature of resources, including the environment.			
Adaptability: Openness to change and improvements that allow for increased efficiency.			
Diversity: Work where there are people with different cultural backgrounds.			
Community: Recognition that one is part of a greater whole.			

Table 3. List of values relating to working relationships

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Respect: High regard for the feelings, wishes and rights of workers.			
Consistency: Leadership is stable and reliable.			
Helpfulness: Providing useful assistance or friendliness.			
Friendships: Work where you socialize with your coworkers.			
Leadership: Work where good leaders are managing the organization.			
Management: Work where there is strong management.			
Open Communication: Work where information is not held back from employees.			
Recognition: Acknowledgment of your work and contribution.			
Support: Work where you help and support each other.			
Teamwork: Work where working together is encouraged.			
Trust: Work where you can count on each other.			
Dedication: The quality of being committed to a task or purpose.			
Compassion: Consideration and concern for the welfare of others.			
Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.			

Value	Not very important	Important	Very important
Fairness: Treating others with fairness and without favoritism or discrimination.			
Collaboration: The act of working together to produce something.			
Authenticity: The quality of being genuine.			
Emotional intelligence: Able to perceive, understand, express, and manage emotions well.			
Positive attitude: Maintaining positivity and enthusiasm even when faced with challenges.			
Camaraderie: Goodwill and lighthearted rapport between or among colleagues.			

Table 4. List of values relating to work activities

Value	Not very Important	Important	Very important
Variety: Work where many different tasks are done during the day.			
Quality: Work produced is of a high standard.			
Analytical: Work that requires interpretation of data and information.			
Challenging: Work that is mentally or physically challenging.			
Creative: Work that uses imagination and creative talents to produce results.			
Helping: Work that serves to help people.			
Innovation: Working on new and novel products or projects.			



Value	Not very Important	Important	Very important
Physical: Work that has a lot of physical activity.			
Public service: Work that interacts with and benefits the public.			
Research: Work that searches for new knowledge.			
Diligence: Constant and earnest effort to complete tasks.			
Attention to detail: Sensitivity to the minor details of a task or interaction.			
Contribution: Work that is meaningful and makes a difference.			
Motivation: Having initiative and being self-directed.			
Efficiency: Making the best possible use of available resources.			
Resourcefulness: The ability to act effectively or imaginatively, especially in difficult situations.			
Excellence: Exceeding expectations, maximizing potential, and demonstrating considerable skill.			
Initiative: Ability to begin or follow through with a plan or task.			
Perseverance: Steady persistence in adhering to a course of action, a task, or a goal.			
Wisdom: The ability to make good judgments based on what you have learned from your experience.			

**Work & Career**

Exercise



30-60 min



Client



No

**Author**

This tool was created by Elaine Houston.

**Goal**

This exercise aims to help participants identify their work-related likes and dislikes, the key factors that make work enjoyable and those that do not. In doing so, individuals will create a priority list that will allow them to focus on what they want in a job, confidently assess new job opportunities, and streamline job-search activities.

Ideal Work Designer

Job satisfaction is individuals' evaluation of their jobs as favorable or unfavorable and reflects how much they like or dislike the various aspects of their work [1]. People who enjoy most elements of their job tend to work harder, perform better, and are generally more satisfied with their jobs [2]. Job satisfaction has also been linked to increased organizational citizenship behavior, reduced turnover, counterproductive work behavior, and fewer absences [3]. Concerning health and well-being, job satisfaction helps lower the risk of burnout and improve general life satisfaction [3].

Because people prefer distinct and diverse features in a job, subjective satisfaction is highest when individual preferences match the role itself [3]. Thus, to increase job satisfaction, people should identify their work-related preferences and seek roles that align with their most important likes while including a few (if any) of their dislikes.

When individuals understand their preferences, it becomes easier to evaluate the suitability of a particular position or career move, thus making job-related choices a less arduous task [2]. Identifying these likes and dislikes also creates a priority list that allows individuals to focus on what they want in a job, confidently assess new career opportunities, and streamline job-search activities [4].



Advice

- Participants can use this exercise to assess whether a potential job opportunity or career change meets their personal preferences and is a suitable match for what they want/need in a job. This tool may also be used to help participants who are unhappy in their current roles. By identifying their likes, dislikes, and what they want/need in a job, individuals will develop a deeper understanding of what does (and does not) make work enjoyable.
- When identifying likes and dislikes (step 1), it may be necessary to encourage participants to elaborate and think more deeply about their answers. For instance, if an individual vaguely states 'my colleagues' as something they disliked about a previous job, the facilitator should help them explore this further. Questions like, 'What specific things did you dislike about your colleagues?' will help participants delve deeper into their responses and provide more detail. The objective is to have a detailed and thoughtful list of likes and dislikes before moving on to the next step.



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Ideal Work Designer

Job satisfaction reflects how much you like or dislike the various aspects of your work. When people like most aspects of their job, they tend to work harder, perform better, experience less burnout, and be more satisfied with their jobs and life in general. In other words, job satisfaction is highest when there is a good match between what you like and your work.

It is, therefore, helpful to identify your likes - and dislikes - if you wish to increase your job satisfaction. Identifying your likes and dislikes makes work-related choices a much simpler task because when you clearly understand what you want in a job, you can confidently assess career opportunities and streamline your job-search process.

In this exercise, you will identify the factors that make work enjoyable and those that do not: your likes and dislikes. In doing so, you will create a priority list that will help you understand your job-related preferences, so you can more easily recognize suitable roles and evaluate future opportunities.

Step 1: Listing your past jobs

First, take some time to think about all the jobs you have held throughout your working life. When you are ready, list these jobs (including your current position) on the worksheet provided (Appendix A).

Step 2: Identifying your work-related likes and dislikes

This step will help you identify your work-related likes and dislikes. Now that you have listed all your jobs, it is time to analyze your preferences.

For each job, think about the aspects that you *did* like, for example:

- What excited you?
- What did you find rewarding?
- What did you appreciate?
- What did you love doing?

Consider the aspects of each job that you *did not* like, for example:

- What made you lose interest?
- What caused feelings of dissatisfaction?
- What irritated you?
- What did you hate doing?

Write your responses in the columns labeled 'Likes' and 'Dislikes.' You should include as much detail as possible and allow yourself enough time to reflect on your experiences in each position.



Step 3: Rating the importance of your likes and dislikes

In this step, you will consider the importance of each like and dislike, detailed in step 1. This will help you create a priority list that will remind you of your needs and wants in any role you consider in the future.

Take a moment to think about your work-related likes, then rate each on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 10 (very important). As you consider each like, record your rating in the column marked 'Importance' on the worksheet provided.

When you complete this, begin rating your dislikes in the same way until each of your work-related likes and dislikes has a score between 1 - 10. An example of a completed worksheet is provided in Appendix B.

Step 4: Analysis

In this step, you will look at your preferences in more detail. Below you will find a series of questions that will help you understand your most important work-related needs and wants.

Take some time to consider the following questions and write your responses in the spaces provided when you are ready to do so.

1. Looking at your most important (highest-rated) likes, do you notice common themes or patterns? For example, being outdoors or being part of a close-knit team.

2. What do your likes tell you about what you need and/or want in a job?



3. Looking at your most important (highest-rated) dislikes, do you notice common themes or patterns? For example, inadequate leadership or lack of autonomy.

4. What do your dislikes tell you about what you need and/or want in a job?

5. What types of jobs would satisfy your most important likes? Include a few (if any) of your dislikes.



6. What small steps can you take to move closer to what you need and/or want in a job?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for the user to write their responses to the question above.

Step 5: Reflection

- What was it like to complete this exercise?
- What insights have you gained about your ideal work?
- How will these insights help you in the future?



Appendix A: Ideal Work Designer Worksheet

Job Title	Likes	Importance (1 - 10)	Dislikes	Importance (1 - 10)

Appendix B: Example of a Completed Ideal Work Designer Worksheet

Job Title	Likes	Importance (1 - 10)	Dislikes	Importance (1 - 10)
Sales assistant	- Working with the public.	5	- Working late nights and weekends.	8
	- Helping customers and ensuring they were satisfied.	6	- Low pay.	7
	- Relationships with teammates.	9	- Pressure to meet pre-determined sales targets.	6
			- Few benefits and no health insurance.	5
Supervisor	- Doing administrative duties.	5	- Weak connection with my teammates.	9
	- More responsibility.	4	- Too many staff meetings.	5
	- Fewer weekend shifts.	7	- Most days/tasks were boring.	8
	- Good benefits.	5		
Retail manager	- Strong connections with colleagues.	9	- Expected to work late with no extra pay.	9
	- Working in a small team.	7	- Stressful and too much pressure to meet targets.	8
	- Training staff members.	4	- Salary didn't reflect responsibilities.	8
			- Didn't like or respect my area manager.	7
Trainee wedding florist	- Creative and fun.	10	- Pressure to make sure everything was perfect.	7
	- Every day was different.	9	- Long hours and late nights.	8
	- Seeing happy clients.	7	- Involved a lot of travel.	6
	- People listened to my ideas.	9	- Only a temporary position.	3
Events planner	- Meticulous planning.	6	- Late nights and weekends.	7
	- Working with a variety of companies and suppliers.	3	- Very stressful.	8
	- Researching venues and vendors.	4	- Unreliable teammates.	9
	- Seeing happy clients.	7	- Long shifts.	6
	- Lots of variety as each event was different.	9	- Planning multiple events at once.	4



Job Title	Likes	Importance (1 - 10)	Dislikes	Importance (1 - 10)
Non-profit events coordinator	- Coordinating event logistics.	6	- Public speaking.	4
	- Meaningful work that helps others.	10	- Performing duties beyond those specified in the job description.	7
	- Developing sponsorship relationships with businesses and individuals.	7	- Long and irregular hours.	8
	- Being closely involved with the community.	9	- Lots of travel.	6
			- High stress.	8